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The largest skill deficit for many professional colleagues, regardless of industry, is the inability to navigate 'conflict' in a way that sustains relationships, while still getting a problem ultimately solved. While this seems a fundamental act of professional work, difficulty with this type of skill set often precludes an employee from achieved advanced levels of promotions including not attaining or sustaining executive leadership.

How do otherwise excelling employees miss the keys to conflict navigation? Often, because they enter their chosen field or industry without early conflict competency. Ironically, this is a skill best learned by early elementary school age. We then spend the rest of our lives repeating the tendency to either embrace conflict as an opportunity to try out our best strategies for collegiality or conversely by running full speed in the opposite direction, thereby leaving conversations incomplete, colleagues confused, and project work at less than a mediocre level of disarray.

What drives our individual impulses to 'leave business unfinished' in the workplace? Fear. Fear of being pigeon holed as the go to person when discomfort and debate arises. Fear of not being able to remedy a conflict with someone who is jockeying for our role if we are not seen as a strong and consistent leader. Fear of having to engage and not knowing what to say – not doing the right thing to do at the right time. Fear of making a fool out of ourselves because we don't think fast on our feet or on our seat. Fear of being out foxed with a strategy that never occurred to us not to mention that we would not know how to execute. Fear. No more and no less.

Can organizations source for new talent that excels at conflict resolution? Absolutely. The use of behavioral interviewing is key to this effort. Can organizations teach excelling methodology for conflict identification and conflict management as well as conflict resolution. Absolutely. Embrace and engage in the 'conversation of conflict' competency first. Integrate the successes of conflict acknowledgement and reward resolution using interest based methods in every possible situation. Coach all levels of your team to move toward conflict and not toward retreat when matters become intense and seemingly short sighted. Conflict management mastery is the pathway to growth. It is the key to high performing organizations contributing in ways that their own industries have not even imaged possible. As we head toward the mid-point for this fiscal year, spend some time reflecting upon the following questions: Is your organization conflict adverse? If yes, why is your organization continuing to reward this approach to the internal and external environments? What is the organization missing by taking this approach? At the end of your career/your organization's life cycle will you frame you legacy with regret for having adopted this position? What will your organization have missed as opportunities by being conflict adverse?